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Parapsychology in the People's Republic of China: 1979 - 1989

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ABSTRACT: The senior author, a graduate student of physics in the U.S.A., provides from his personal involvement an informal history of the parapsychology movement in the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) over the last decade. From 1979 to 1982, research into ESP (and PK) among children swept through China. This study, under the name "exceptional functions of the human body" (EFHB), gave rise to a sizeable literature and to commitments, pro and con, among scientists. Two protagonists emerged to carry the battle to the highest political forum. The opponent of EFHB was an eminent social scientist and vice-chairman of the Chinese Academy of Science. The proponent was a physicist regarded internationally as the father of Chinese rocketry. After public debate, ending in a collaborative test of the country's best-known psychics, the Communist Party ruled that both sides must cease public discussion but that unsupported research could proceed quietly. From 1983 to 1986, interest shifted to gifted adult psychics. Research was conducted partly at major universities but primarily under defense-related auspices in Beijing, where gross PK effects were reported. Meanwhile, privately circulated publications fanned civilian research interest in parapsychology under the ancient rubrics of "qigong" and "Traditional Chinese Medicine." In 1987 a set of seminal PK experiments was reported in the Chinese *Journal of Biophysics* from Quinghua University. From 1987 to 1989 interest in qigong grew until there were perhaps 20 million participants, including top leaders of the Communist Party. Restraints on research were quietly lifted. Official approval was granted to a "China Society of Somatic Science" for the study of EFHB. The space scientist mentioned earlier was made responsible for coordinating all of Chinese science. The favoring of parapsychology has apparently persisted despite the events of June, 1989. Meanwhile, a divergence of the popular qigong movement and scientific EFHB research has begun. The greater prevalence and strength of psi effects reported from the P.R.C., as compared to laboratory experience in the West, raises a question as to the role of the West's Cartesian cultural heritage in determining empirical reality.

[1]In accordance with Chinese custom, Chinese family names precede given names in this paper except in the author's by-line, where the U.S.A. custom of family-name-last is followed to facilitate indexing.

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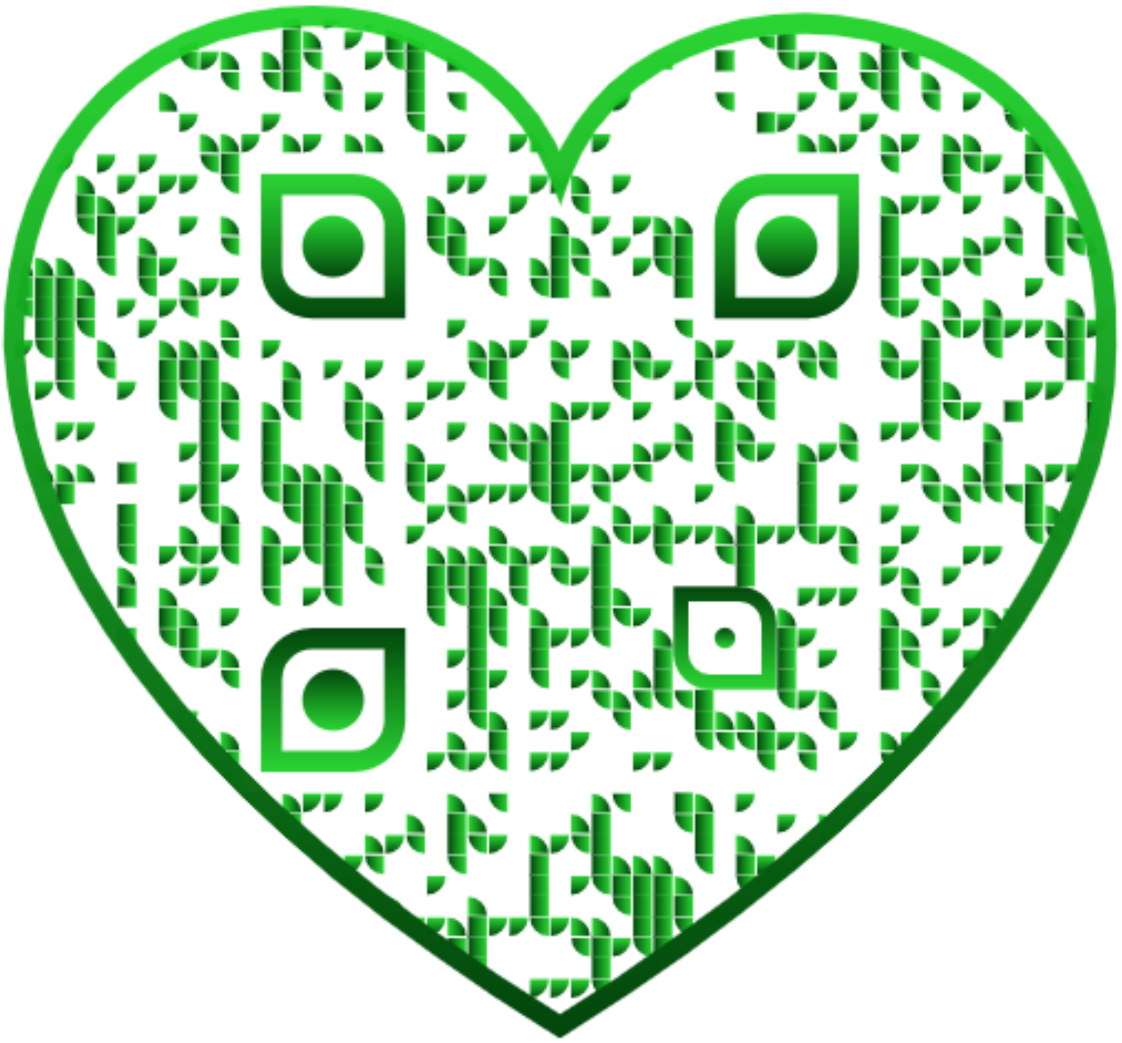

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Introduction

Although references to the existence and application of psi phenomena are frequently found in the major books of ancient Chinese history dating back 2,000 years, there is also a present-day Chinese interest in such effects. The most recent scientific inquiries began in late 1978 when a group of scientists tested Tang Yu, a 12-year old boy in Sichuan Province, for his reported "Exceptional Functions of the Human Body" (EFHB), a widely used Chinese expression for extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK). It was a propitious time for such a discovery because the chaos of the Cultural Revolution had subsided, while economic reform had not yet begun. The country's intellectuals were starting to exercise some freedom of choice in selecting what to study, and they did not yet feel under pressure from their regular work at the universities and research institutes as they would several years later. Likewise, for a period of several years, children, who were often the best psi subjects, were under less pressure to devote all of their time to school study.

To describe the psi-related activities in China between 1979 and 1989 (inclusive), the senior author has divided this period into three phases. The first phase covers 1979-1982, the second covers 1983-1986, and the third covers 1987-1989.

Phase I (1979-1982): The Re-discovery of ESP

Early in the Twentieth Century a Chinese psychical-study society had been formed as a result of Western influence, but the society never flourished. In the 1960's, reports of Western and Russian psi studies appeared in several popular Chinese technical magazines, but shortly thereafter the topic was criticized as being "idealistic" and symbolic of "declining capitalism" (Hsin, 1975). The authors of such reports were persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, which extended from 1966 to 1976.

The first phase of present day Chinese psychic studies (1979-1982) was characterized by its popularity. Many hundreds of children with EFHB were found throughout the nation. Groups to investigate these phenomena were formed in almost all educational and research centers in large cities, and even in some elementary and secondary schools. According to a recent study (Yi, 1987), at least 500 formally trained scholars from more than a hundred centers joined the effort. Reports published in *Nature Journal* (*NJ*), which had supported the EFHB research from the beginning,[2] reported that 40 to 63 percent of children around age 10 were found to have EFHB to some extent in a large-scale ESP investigation in Beijing (Cheng, et al., 1979; He, et al., 1980). The term EFHB was expanded to include PK after it was discovered that subjects with ESP could sometimes also affect the state of small objects, e.g., bend a match or reset the hands of a watch. The senior author, while still an undergraduate student, was able to repeat many of the reported ESP and PK experiments successfully with his young friends. These replications were performed under fairly tight conditions and without much difficulty, usually by just telling these friends what others had claimed to be able to do and letting them try immediately.

In the early 1980's, nearly every issue of *NJ* reported new discoveries of EFHB. Researchers used a variety of analytical instruments in an attempt to detect any "radiations" that might be produced by the children's efforts. In these investigations, signals ranging from infra-red emissions modulated by low audio frequencies to gamma photons were detected, although many of the effects were weak. Traces of exposure were found on protected x-ray films, and various

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[2]*Nature Journal (Ziran Zazhi)* is a major Chinese scientific monthly, published in Shanghai at a technical level comparable to that of U.S.A.'s *Science* with some original research papers and letters.

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physical, chemical, and biological detectors registered an "output." The researchers were excited, convinced that their discoveries were not artifactual but were of scientific importance, and would lead possibly to a great scientific breakthrough.

However, Dr. Qian Xuesen,[3] a leading physicist, and several other top researchers pointed out that these signals were probably only secondary manifestations of an underlying information carrier, "qi" (which means "air", "gas", "spirit", or "vital energy" in Chinese), and not the underlying carrier itself.[4] As the research continued, scientists began to realize how weak and unstable the EFHB effects were. Having been isolated from the rest of the world for so long, Chinese researchers were now independently re-discovering evidence for psychic phenomena that had been studied in the West for a hundred years. In the course of these re-discoveries, Chinese researchers became increasingly aware of the difficulties and complexities of the subject.

An unofficial preliminary organization, called the *Chinese Human-Body Science Association Preparatory Committee* was formed in 1980 under the aegis of *Nature Journal*.[5] This preparatory committee was nationwide in scope and sponsored two national conventions which were held in Shanghai (1980) and Chongqing (1981). The conventions were somewhat informal and were attended by amateur enthusiasts of differing backgrounds as well as by serious scientists. To accommodate the large number of papers sent to *NJ*'s editors, publication of a monthly newsletter, the *EFHB Bulletin*, was begun in 1981, staffed by employees from *NJ*. Nevertheless, most of the major research results in this phase were published in *NJ*.

The invited speech by Chen Xin and Mei Lei at the joint convention of the Parapsychological Association and the Society for Psychical Research held in Cambridge, England, in 1982 (Chen & Mei, 1983), was a good summary of Chinese parapsychological research activity at that time.[6] Although some of the experiments reported in this early phase seemed naive; still there were many challenging or puzzling findings. For example, results obtained with a group of blind subjects in an experiment done by the EFHB Research Group of Bambu Traditional Chinese Medicine College (1980) provided strong evidence of ESP.

It is interesting that in later, well controlled experiments, the "sheep-goat" and "decline" effects were encountered by Chinese experimenters. They also collected other evidence which, to a degree, weighed against fraud as an explanation for the many successful experiments. Although there is as yet no paper specifically dealing with this evidence in a systematic fashion, some arguments are as follows:

1. The accuracy of the ESP result or the effectiveness of the PK effort was found to vary inversely as the

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[3]Transliterated as "Tsien Hsueh-Sen" in his early publications.

[4]In transliteration, the Chinese phonetic symbols *q*, *x*, and *z*, for example, correspond in Mandarin to sounds that cannot be represented by a single letter in English. Expressed without benefit of the international phonetic alphabet, when they appear at the beginning of a syllable, these letters are approximtely equivalent to English language combinations *ch*, *sh*, and *ts*, respectively. Thus, the approximate pronounciation of *qi* is "chee." The pronunciation of persons names is further confused by the fact that some professionally established Chinese were allowed to keep their previous English spellings after the 1950's transliteration reform.

[5]In P.R.C. all orgnizations of whatever kind must be officially approved. Once approved, an organization is usually provided financial support for its operational activities, depending on the general area of the subject and the size of the membership.

[6]An independent description of this period of research was given by H. E. Puthoff (1983) from SRI International, based upon his visit to P.R.C. in 1981. Participation in three ESP experiments with children in Hefei and Beijing was reported by C. K. Jen (1983) of Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory as a visiting professor to P.R.C. in 1980-1981. Dr. L.C. Teng, an Associate Director of the Fermi National Laboratory at Batavia, Illinois, participated in a strikingly successful ESP experiment with a child subject while making a lecture stop at the Institute of Modern Physics in Lanchou in 1980 (Teng, 1981). A detailed account of Chinese parapsychological activity in the years 1979-1982 will be found in Dong (1984), a Chinese-American lecturer and writer who studied Chinese occult beliefs for several years and visited P.R.C. for six weeks in 1981.

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length of time of the trial once the subject(s) had reached a "favorable state." For instance, it was repeatedly observed in ESP trials (typically recognizing "by ear" Chinese language characters sealed in boxes), that when the children responded within a few minutes, perhaps 90% of their answers were correct. ("Qi is coming", they would say). In many cases they were able to respond in only 2 or 3 seconds, and, when this occurred, the results were nearly always right. However, if they could give only a hesitating description after many minutes, the results were most often wrong -- they were simply guessing. This is contrary to the expectation that when more time is available, there will be a greater chance of success in cheating.

2. Young girls, aged from 6-12, were considered the best ESP candidates, and a majority of the work in the early phase was done with them. However, as they grew a little older or, more accurately, usually after menstruation started, their ESP ability ceased. This is contrary to the rule that the more mature the child, the more easily it can deceive adults. The observed fact is explained by ancient phenomenological qigong theory, which claims that "qi" can come from two sources: "Yuan-qi", or primary "psycho-body-energy" is acquired at birth and disappears as one matures. Qi is also gained through qigong practice.[7]

3. There can be interference with psi effort, and it need not come from a hostile person. For example, under the senior author's direction four children, who were well known to him, were doing an ESP demonstration experiment. The experiment was proceeding with a high rate of success until a college student in the audience who had studied qigong for several months but was still a beginner, decided to attempt the announced task. The ESP of the children suddenly disappeared and they reported a feeling of being confused and disturbed. The children's sudden failure seems contrary to the common sense idea that hoaxers will continue their trick if it works well.

The dramatic public interest in psi and the resulting unprecedented large-scale inquiry by academic scholars drew criticism soon after the movement began. The most famous attacker was Mr. Yu Guangyuan, who was backed by many highly placed scientists. On the other hand, there were other eminent scientists who defended the study of psi. They were represented by Dr. Qian Xuesen (the previously mentioned physicist).

Two Eminent Scientists, the Great Debate, and the Party's Ruling

Mr. Yu Guangyuan, a social scientist, held many powerful positions. He was, among other things, vice-chairman of the Chinese Academy of Science, vice-director of the Academia Sinica's Science and Technology Committee, and director of the Institute of Marxism, Leninism, and Thoughts of Mao Zedong. It is believed that Yu's opposition to psi was a personal choice reinforced by agitation from some high-ranking close-minded scientists who could not consider unexplained phenomena that might affect their fields of research.

Mr. Yu's papers on psi, most of which were very long, appeared after May, 1981, in scholarly journals such as *Chinese Social Science* and *Philosophy Research*. His longest, of book length, was scheduled for serialization in the monthly periodical *Knowledge Is Power*, (a popular science magazine), beginning in October, 1981. During this time, Yu visited many major cities throughout the country, giving lectures at university and government meetings in oppostion to psi and sponsoring a small, short-lived periodical named *Investigations of the EFHB*.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Yu refused to participate in any psychic trials because, as he once

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[7]In the West, the term Transcendental Meditation is often used for Chinese qigong, although in fact, this is inappropriate, since the way qigong is practiced (which in many cases is not placid) does not conform to the impression that the term Transcendental Meditation imparts. Qigong has nothing to do with the modern New Age movement, nor should it be equated with Indian yoga, since qigong is independently oriented and was developed beginning several thousand years ago in China. The practice of qigong and yoga are different, although they undoubtedly have a fundamental relationship.

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reportedly said, his children, his secretary, and many old friends had gone to see psi trials (upon the invitation of psi researchers) and almost all of the attendees were easily deceived and made to believe in the reality of psi. Thus, he had better not personally try to observe such trials or he too might be deceived "by the techniques of stage magic."

Yu's arguments were extremely weak. Checking through Yu's papers, the senior author has found that Yu's opposition was based upon the following two arguments:

1. The claimed parapsychological phenomena are contrary to Marxism, Leninism, dialectical materialism, and currently known scientific laws and therefore cannot be true.
2. There have been many cases of psi trials, both in China and in other countries, which were found to be fraudulent. Considering the improbability of the phenomena, common sense tells us that all such claims must be hoaxes.

It is obvious that these two arguments are logically and methodologically incorrect. The existence of a phenomenon is not precluded by any theory, and a part of available evidence does not necessarily represent the whole. Indeed, these two arguments were so fragile that, after June, 1982, when publication of Yu's multi-part paper was halted by the Party's decision (which will be discussed in detail below), the *NJ* editors managed to obtain the unpublished portions and published them in full in their own informal *EFHB Bulletin*.

The scientists and leaders supporting Yu were even more eager than he to halt the study of psi. The Academia Sinica held a meeting in Beijing on February 24, 1982, which was attended by 4,000 scholars, to attack the psi studies and to call for "fair but strictly controlled" trials in which both sides would participate. The results of these trials would lead to a final judgment and thus close the issue. The meeting was given extensive coverage by both the *Xinghua News Agency* and the *People's Daily* newspaper, the two most important government-authorized media. Their news dispatches expressed strong disapproval of the psi researchers.

The person leading the other side of the debate was the above-mentioned scientist Dr. Qian Xuesen, the "father of Chinese rocketry". He studied at MIT in the 1930's and completed his Ph.D. at the California Institute of Technology's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, where he was subsequently appointed Goddard Professor of Jet Propulsion. At one time he was director of the rocket section of the U.S. National Defense Scientific Advisory Board. Although the Americans granted Dr. Qian's request to return to China in 1955, in exchange for 11 American Pilots from the Korean War, it was later rumored that the U.S. government regretted the decision, for they believed that without Qian, China would not have been able to join the nuclear and space clubs so soon.

Dr. Qian first showed his support of qigong research publicly in June, 1980, when he visited *NJ*. In a private conversation with the Journal's editor Dr. Qian is reported to have said:

> No one has ever undertaken to discover the ultimate capabilities of the human body. Henceforth, we should use science and technology to study human potential. Thus, we should study Chinese traditional medical theories, qigong, exceptional functions of the human body, and so on. In the end, all this will result in developing the exceptional functions you have been studying. There is much opposition to the integration of Western and Chinese medicine, including qigong and EFHB. It is permissable to use different approaches in research. Many natural phenomena are still not explained by science, and this is the way it has been throughout the history of science. We need a leader who is strong enough to face critics, and that is why I have come to visit and to show my respect for your journal (*Nature Journal*, editorial report, 1980).

Dr. Qian answered Mr. Yu's challenge by emphasizing that it is important to perform experiments rather than merely to stick with existing theories. Dr. Qian believed that anthropic science[8]

[8]The term "anthropic" was officially used in English translations in the early phases but was later replaced by "somatic", although the Chinese term remained the same.

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would become a major branch of modern science and technology and attain the same standing that the natural sciences, the social sciences, the behavioral sciences, mathematics, systems theory, military theory, and the fine arts have today (Yi, 1988). He also predicted that a breakthrough in anthropic science would necessarily cause a new revolution in science and technology, thereby changing the future of mankind completely. He believed that such a change would be far more profound than the scientific revolution of the early Twentieth Century which was brought about by the development of relativity and quantum theory (Qian, 1983).

These arguments were politically effective, in part because of Dr. Qian's important position and his influence upon Chinese policy makers, especially the military leaders. Another high ranking political and military leader, Mr. Zhang Zhenhuan, who was at that time Chairman of the Commission of Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense, endorsed open discussion of EFHB in response to Dr. Qian's call for support of the field. Mr. Zhang later became the president of the China Society of Somatic Science (CSSS).

Although he rarely performed a formal experiment himself, Dr. Qian did observe many trials by qigong masters and, on one occasion, experienced in person the power of their "qigong external emission" ("qigong waiqi" or "exterior energy"). Also convinced by what they had seen were many highly respected senior natural scientists, who expressed their support for the proponents of EFHB. These scientists included Wong Gangchang, Zhao Zhongrao, Bei Shizhang, Mao Yisheng, Qian Weichang, Tan Jiazheng, Yang Longsheng, Wang Dezhao, Zhu Guangya and Tang Aoqing, a chemist who was later elected president of the Academia Sinica.

In an attempt to settle the issue fairly, a joint trial was arranged by the Party's National Committee of Science in April, 1982. A disagreement concerning the design of the experiments arose between the opposing factions before the trial was formally begun, and as a result, some members of the anti-psi faction withdrew, saying that they would not acknowledge the validity of the outcome of the trial. Nevertheless, the trial did proceed at Beijing Teacher's College with members of both factions in attendance. The results, by and large, were negative, with the exception of those produced by "Z" (see later). However, since "Z" did provide strong positive results and no evidence of cheating was discovered in any of the tests, the pro-psi members of the joint committee took the offensive and circulated reports of the trial in the first issue of an "internally circulating" magazine, *EFHB Research* (see later), although the reported results were chosen to exclude the negative responses (Combined Committee for EHFB Tests, 1983). Meanwhile, the anti-psi faction chose not to make any report of the results.

As usually happens in a centrally-controlled country, when no one wants to be on the losing side of an issue, both sides turned to the Party for a resolution. Dr. Qian Xuesen wrote a letter to the Party's Central Propaganda Department asking the Department to protect the freedom of science, while Yu Guangyuan continued to push for a ban on psi as an approved research topic. Dr. Qian's letter was forwarded to the Central Committee and finally the leaders made a judgment. The ruling came down on the side of Yu, but permission was granted for psi researchers to continue on a restricted scale. The decision was announced on May 13, 1982, by Hu Yaobang, who was then the Party's General Secretary. The Party's Propaganda Department also issued two announcements in April and June giving basically the same instructions:

> The EFHB is not [an officially accepted] subject for our scientific research. Before proof of the phenomena is firmly established, our media should not propagandize or make any comment about any test or experiment. These rules are believed to be appropriate and justified, so they must be observed. However, we may allow a minority group of scholars to continue their study [of] the topic and let them publish an internally circulated publication for the consideration of concerned scientists, and permit those who are interested to read it and to continue their research efforts (Hu, 1982).

The Party's ruling was obeyed. *NJ* stopped carrying papers on psi research; while *Knowledge*

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is Power ceased publication of Yu's serialized paper as of June, 1982. Psi enthusiasts in universities and institutes were not permitted to include their psi studies as part of their formal work load or to freely distribute results of their psi research to the general public. Thus, the first phase of modern Chinese parapsychological research, which had been characterized by its large-scale effort, ended.

Phase II (1983-1986): Quiet Research Continues

In contrast to the earlier years, the scale of research in the second phase was much smaller and quieter. Following the disappearance of the coverage of psi by the news media, most ordinary people soon forgot about the subject and the rest incorrectly assumed that the psi reports were fraudulent and had been banned by the Party.

A majority of the former investigators also gradually drifted away from the subject, not because they doubted the genuineness of the observed results or because they had lost interest, but for more pragmatic reasons: The economic reform had started and, in accordance with the newly adopted policies, promotions were no longer based on the number of years a scholar had worked in his unit, but more and more upon his achievements. Since EFHB study was "not a recognized research topic," and could not be counted as formal work, it was not considered in making promotion decisions. Also, the new open-market policy created many opportunities for intellectuals to make money by employing their knowledge in support of the country's modernization, These opportunities were highly attractive to the nation's professional thinkers, who had been in an inferior economic position for so long. In addition, keen competition to be admitted to the better universities and even to the better high schools was forcing psychic children and their worried parents to decline further invitations to participate in psi testing. Such activities seemed irrelevant to the future careers of the children.

Nevertheless, as allowed by the Party, psi groups survived and continued their former endeavors; while the field moved in new directions through the efforts of Dr. Qian Xuesen and his fellow military officers, including Mr. Zhang Zhenhuan. It was no secret that in late 1981, Qian and Zhang had successfully set up a psi study site known as the 507 Institute, or Space Medico-Engineering Institute (SMEI). This Institute, located in suburban Beijing, is under the defense-related Spaceflight Department. It had been established earlier in the 1960's to provide medical support for the astronauts of the proposed Chinese space effort, but in the early 1970's the idea of manned space flight was postponed due to more urgent considerations relating to the nation's reconstruction. Thus, a team with considerable relevant experience was already in place. Included were two researchers strongly interested in EFHB, Prof. Chen Hsin, Dean of the Institute, and Prof. Mei Lei, both of whom attended the 1982 joint convention in England of the Parapsychological Association and the Society for Psychical Research. Research proceeded smoothly, in part because those who opposed psi research had almost no power within the military system, and also because open attack on psi research was no longer permitted due to the Party's previous ruling.

At the beginning, teams in the SMEI carefully reviewed reports from both inside and outside the nation. In Professors Chen and Mei's 1982 address at Cambridge University, England, they reported only the results previously obtained by Chinese researchers outside the SMEI, in addition to the ideas offered by Dr. Qian. As time progressed, the SMEI became more independent and isolated from the civilian research community. The senior author heard complaints from university professors that they no longer had access to the psychic subjects with whom they had previously worked and, furthermore, that they were not very well informed as to what was occurring within the SMEI. Of course, the civilian researchers were pleased to see that there was a

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formally endorsed, well-supported team to continue research in the subject, but they increasingly found that they had become outsiders with almost nothing to do. They also realized that, in the defense-related unit, practical applications of psi might have a higher priority than basic scientific inquiries. Indeed, the SMEI team had many advantages. Psi study was their official task, and as in other top defense-related institutes, they were well equipped and well funded. They had the money to attract and support the country's top psychics and they actually did so. Several famous subjects had been moved in as full-time co-operators, including Zhang Baosheng, who had been formerly reported in many papers as "Z".

Born in 1955 in Bengxi city, Liaoning Province, Zhang Baosheng showed his ESP abilities as early as 1976 in the countryside. He was tested by a group of local psi researchers and came to Beijing in early 1982, at a time when the skeptical pressure against the EFHB teams was at its peak. In a certain sense, it was Zhang who saved the study of psi since he was about the only one able to show distinctly positive results in the hostile atmosphere and under the rigorous scrutiny applied by the skeptics in the "joint trial" early that summer. Many believe it was Zhang's success that positively affected the Party leaders and led to their mild and impartial directive.

In his earlier personal experience with Zhang Baosheng, gained over months of close observation, the senior author found that, as with many other major psychics under loose control, Zhang was able to perform numerous incredible miracles. Most of these involved apparent PK, and many were done in the way the senior author or others requested, with the targets seemingly chosen at random. For example, Zhang caused objects, such as someone's photo identification card or personal name stamp to move to another room which had not been entered, or caused a torn personal letter to be restored to a single piece.

Of course Zhang Baosheng did many experiments under presumably tightly controlled conditions, and one of the reports of his PK experiments (Lin, et al., 1983), which was performed by a group of 19 researchers headed by Prof. Lin Shuhuang of the Physics Department of Beijing Teacher's College, was published in *EFHB Research*.[9] This experimental report clearly illustrates the typical target-selection and sealing techniques used in China, and, thus, is a good example of how such experiments were conducted. The paper reported some favorite skills of the psychic, such as extracting medical pills, small papers having unique signs, or even marked live insects from carefully sealed containers. The best tamper-proof seals included chemical tracer papers which could not touch the target without leaving visible signs or other means of detection.

By the year 1984, Zhang Baosheng was under the complete control of the SMEI team. They provided him with everything he wanted: an assigned car, special meal plan, color TV, VCR, camera, etc. Many times he was called upon to demonstrate his PK in front of highly placed Party or military leaders. (Those demonstrations were of course not under tight control.) Rarely did the civilian researchers who had worked with him get the chance to reach him again. However, the SMEI team did report some highly unusual experiments, including a PK film photographically recording at 400 frames per second the passing of a medical pill through glass, including frames showing the penetration process (Huo, 1987). An important sign of the military support of the field is that this film, was awarded a "Scientific Research Achievement Prize" of the second class by the Spaceflight Department later in 1987, a recognition which must be unique in the history of parapsychology, especially in that it happened in a communist country.

Some of his investigators did wonder if Zhang Baosheng ever cheated in his public demonstrations. They suspected that he did so to "save face" when he was not able to succeed honestly

[9]After the Party's April 1982 ruling, the informally published *EFHB Bulletin* attained quasi-official status as a restricted-circulation journal under the name *EFHB Research* and continued to be produced by the personnel of *NJ*.

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after extended effort in front of high-ranking guests. They believed, however, that the formally reported results were genuine because they were under tight control and done in a matter of minutes. The senior author feels it may never be known if Zhang used trickery in these informal cases since Zhang has never admitted, as do many present-day qigong masters, that he is sometimes without power.

Two hypotheses present themselves. It is possible that Zhang Baosheng (who has no appreciation of science) lives in his own mystical world where his perhaps-somewhat-limited psi abilities have destroyed in his thinking the barrier between reality and fantasy, so that it is a matter of indifference to him whether he uses psi or legerdemain to achieve his immediate goal.

Alternatively, Zhang's bizarre, apparent PK abilities may reflect a psycho-physical reality that mocks our presumptions of what is possible. Given the facts that micro-PK involving small forces and energies has been fully established in principle and that gross PK has been presumptively established both by spontaneous cases and by experiments in the USA and the USSR, the authors believe it is proper for a scientist to suspend judgment when confronted by accounts such as the above.

In this period, civilian researchers throughout the nation also continued their study of EFHB, although mostly in their off-duty hours. Psi effects were openly mentioned in many papers published in the magazines of Traditional Chinese Medicine and qigong practice, and even sometimes in *NJ*, because such papers were considered to be medically related or descriptive of physical exercises and thus not in violation of the Party's ruling. Several popular qiqong magazines, such as *Qigong, Oriental Qigong*, and *Qigong and Science*, which were begun in the early 1980's, were able to continue. These effectively prepared the way for the subsequent expansion of the qigong movement.

Phase III (1987-1989): The Qigong Movement Resurges and Gains New Support

As a special physical practice, qigong (sometimes referred to as "the internal action of psycho-body energy" or "breath exercise") originated in China, where it has a rich history. Records show that it had been systematically developed as early as 500 B.C. and that it was widely accepted and practiced in every Chinese dynasty. There are various schools of qigong, each emphasizing different techniques to attain its own specific purpose. However, it is agreed by all schools that, by sending qi to certain parts of the body through the "meridian channels" and by practicing in certain ways, psi abilities can be attained. Although the initial purpose of practice is to regain the qi lost while growing up, there are said to be abilities more profound than psi which can be attained by higher level qigong masters who can "freely control qi by the mind and cause it to circulate through the entire human body." Many people in China believe that there are quite a few such masters, working as ordinary people and almost never admitting their secret power. They have views on matter, mind, life, and the universe very different from ours and have no interest in fame or money. Occasionally they show a little of their power to respected guests such as Dr. Qian, who said once he was knocked down by the "qigong external emission" applied at a distance upon his request by an anonymous host, but usually they do not accept a psi researcher's invitation to join a scientific effort.

Maybe the mysterious effects experienced with top qigong masters will never be available for scientific study, but there are still many lower-level masters who are active in China, practicing their art, and offering help to others. Quite a few of them are sufficiently well trained to be able to to exercise strong psi abilities. Their amazed pupils spread the word so that more and more people are attracted. That is what happened in the late 1970's after the Cultural Revolution, when

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an official prohibition against qigong was slowly removed. The movement did not fall under the Party's ruling of May, 1982, because researchers cleverly avoided stressing the psi aspect of qigong. A "China Qigong Science Association" was able to gain governmental approval in December, 1985 (Zhi, 1986). A rapid expansion of interest began in 1986 after several highly successful qigong demonstrations were widely publicized.

Whether by the placebo effect or otherwise, qigong methods have proved useful in the cure of diseases, especially chronic ones for which Western medicine has no effective remedies. Qigong has also been found valuable for strengthening one's physique. As a result, qigong training courses were for the first time listed in many universities following a directive from the Education Department in late 1987 (*Qigong and Science*, 1988). Qigong curing clinics emerged by the hundreds, and existing formal hospitals were expanded to accommodate new qigong departments. It is estimated that at least 20 million people in P.R.C., many of them well educated, were practicing qigong in some form and at some level by the end of 1987 (Yi, 1988). Foreign visitors were astonished to see that the qigong learners blocked parks, courtyards, and small streets while doing their morning or evening exercises. Most of these learners may have never mastered psi, but with such widespread effort there may well have been many who did.

It is obvious that the qigong movement and the reappearance of EFHB news reports (often related to qigong practices) could not have occurred in this tightly controlled country without a decision by the Party to change its earlier ruling. This was done informally. Instead of issuing a new document, the instructions were given privately and gradually by some of the Party's senior leaders.

It is widely believed that many leaders at the highest positions became interested in qigong and convinced of the reality of EFHB. In the first phase there were many specially arranged psi demonstrations, some privately performed, in an effort by some of the researchers to gain governmental support. As time went on, it was found that a better way to obtain support was to let qigong masters take care of the health of the leaders. Countless healing sessions were held, and a wide variety of effects were demonstrated. Some leaders reportedly started to practice qigong themselves. It was said, for instance, that Deng Xiaoping, the party and military head, became interested in qigong and asked to watch the videotapes of a qigong master's therapeutic lectures (see later). It was also said that there are now top qigong masters in attendance to maintain his health. Other leaders went farther. Hu Qiaomu, the standing member of the Party's Central Political Bureau in charge of propaganda, said in a reported meeting in 1987:

> We should mobilize every unit in our society to study qigong science. I believe it is a very fundamental scientific effect and absolutely not superstitious fiction. This is not something about which one "should not propagandize, or make any comment", but a topic that needs great efforts to publicize and facilitate its development to serve the four modernizations [Li, 1988, p. 315].

This speech is clearly contrary to the former ruling and, though not mentioned, the inner quotation is from the previously-referred-to May 13, 1982 speech of Hu Yaobang, the former Party general secretary who had been subsequently removed from power. Other top leaders who expressed their support of qigong and of EFHB study were Wan Li, Ye Jianying, Wang Zhen, Pen Zeng, Pen Chong, and Wang Renzhong, almost all of them senior politicians. As final evidence of the acceptability of qigong and psi research, the application presented seven years earlier by the preliminary committee under the translated name "Chinese Human-Body Science Association" (and "China Anthropic Science Association") was finally approved on May 3, 1987, under a new officially translated name as the "Chinese Society of Somatic Science" (CSSS). Mr. Zhang Zhenhuan was elected as the CSSS's first president to honor his contributions, although he had retired from his military commission by then. Thus, parapsychological research was officially accepted as a legitimate field of research.

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An important change affecting the qigong movement occurred in 1987 when Dr. Qian Xuesen was named chairman of the Chinese Science and Technology Association, the semi-governmental commission that coordinates the nation's scientific research. Dr. Qian, although famous, had held no position outside the military before, but now he was granted the right to guide the nation's science policy. He did not waste this opportunity and soon gave instructions urging the furtherance of somatic science. He is quoted as saying:

"Chinese qigong is modern science and technology--high technology--absolutely top technology" (Yi, 1988, p. 171).

What caused Dr. Qian to offer so strong an endorsement? Aside from the prize-winning report described in Phase II above, we do not know what may have been achieved by defense-related teams such as SMEI. It seems certain, however, that Dr. Qian was strongly impressed by the results reported in Academia Sinica's *Shengwu Wuli Xuebao (Journal of Biophysics)* by Lu Zuying and colleagues (Lu, Zhao, et. al, 1987) of the Department of Chemistry and Biological Science at Qinghua University, which is the nation's foremost technological school.

In a series of experiments conducted between December 1986 and March 1987, qigong master Yan Xing, typically working at a distance of several kilometers, was able to create, shift, or intensify absorption peaks in the infra-red, ultra-violet, and paramagnetic resonance spectra of biological media. In other cases, chemical phase-change parameters were shifted.

Concerning these results, Dr. Qian made the following recommendation to the editors of the *Journal of Biophysics*:

> The content of this paper is highly original. It has indeed indisputably proved that man can change the molecular properties of a substance without touching it. It is unprecedented work. Therefore, it should be published immediately, to announce this Chinese achievement to the whole world (Qian Cheng & Zhou, 1988, p. 283).

Born in 1950 in Giangyu county, Sichang Province, Yan Xing is currently one of China's foremost qigong masters. Mr. Yan began to practice qigong in his early childhood and was a pupil of Hi Deng Fashi, a famous Chinese "wusu" (martial arts) and qigong master. Unlike many other qigong students, Mr. Yan later attended school and graduated as a doctor from Chengdu Traditional Chinese Medicine College. He became famous in Chong Qing City for his "qi-emission" healing. It was repeatedly reported that patients, including those with comminuted bone fractures, were cured and able to return to work immediately as a result of Yan's treatment. To satisfy skeptics, the cured bones were x-rayed before and after by medical doctors. Yan's patients, who numbered in the hundreds, began to write articles telling of his miracles. As a result of the spread of these stories by local news media, Yan came to Beijing in late 1986, where he did the PK experiments described above (Lu, Zhao, et. al., 1987) that excited Chairman Qian, as well as other experiments with physical effects (Lu, An, et. al., 1987; Lu, Zhang, et. al., 1988).

For the general public, Yan Xing's fame came mostly from his therapeutic lectures, which were referred to as "lectures carrying the qigong effect." His lectures were usually very long, lasting 8 to 14 hours, and were given in hundreds of cities with audiences as large as 30,000. In some cases, towns were nearly emptied and factories declared a holiday to allow their workers to attend the lectures. It was reported that during the course of these lectures many audience members were cured as "the healing qi filled the room". Paralyzed patients in wheelchairs stood up and walked with tears of gratitude; cripples who came in on crutches walked out on their feet; patients' gall stones disintegrated; diabetes was mitigated; cancers sent into remission; and pains in general, disappeared. While remaining on the stage, Yan talked only about the power of qi emission treatments and taught preliminary practice methods, meanwhile "releasing qi" as he talked. The claimed miracles happened by themselves without his direct individual attention.

To verify these unbelievable effects, a research group from the High-Energy Institute of

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Academia Sinica (which is also an important Chinese psi study site) reportedly slipped into a lecture hall without telling the master, bringing with them various radiation measuring instruments. From a scientific point of view, they collected records of broad-band radiations of greater magnitude than their control recordings, but perhaps the most interesting datum gathered was the reported fact that during a 14 hour, non-stop lecture only 43 out of the estimated 1,400 people in the audience left the hall even temporarily, and of these, many went directly to pick up their children from closing kindergartens. The remainder of the audience had water but no food and did not leave even to visit restrooms. Evidently, their mental concentration was so intense that some physiological functions were largely suspended.

Yan's demonstrations pose more questions than science can hope to answer. Several scholars in Qinghua University initially were excited participants when Yan performed various transformations of the physical characterisitics of samples at a distance of several meters, but they grew fearful and withdrew upon observing that the same results were being obtained when the master was at Guangzhou City, over 2,000 kilometers away from the samples being affected. (The distance would suggest a teleological process rather than one governed by the inverse-square law.) If these reports are true, the matter-mind relation must be more profound than most Western parapsychologists are willing to imagine.

There are still other top qigong masters besides Yan Xing in China today: Chen Linfong, Mong Haunzhang, Wu Huawen, Wang Baojing, Huang Zenzhong, Wang Niping, Qiuan Guanliang, to name but a few. The whole attitude of society toward qigong has changed. Stories of these masters appear daily in the news media, including major national publications such as the *People's Daily*. An International Qigong Science Convention was held in October, 1988, in Beijing at which 142 printed papers from several Asian countries were presented, many from members of the newly approved CSSS.

Qigong medicine is taking on some of the roles of Behavioral Medicine in the U.S.A. For example, a "China Qigong Cancer Treatment Research Association" was formed as a branch of the China Cancer Research Foundation in February, 1989. It is said to include 3 research institutes, 4 hospitals, 2 recovery centers, and 14 regional organizations (*Qigong*, 1989).

An example of the changing academic prospects for parapsychology in China is the thriving civilian research group headed by Prof. Lin Shuhuang at Beijing Teacher's College, one of the most active and productive teams thoughout the 1980's. In the middle of the decade, Prof. Lin in the Physics Department of the College found it difficult to survive academically because his psi work was not formally accepted. Now, however, he has been promoted to the position of head of the College's Scientific Research Coordinating Office. Still spending most of his energy on psi research, he and his colleagues have been able to formally establish a "Comprehensive Technology Institute" which has gained official support from the Chinese National Science Foundation, as well as at state, ministry, and commission levels, thereby allowing Lin to continue his somatic science work.

Most Westerners will find it hard to believe that parapsychology could gain so much momentum in a communist country where materialism is supposedly dominant. The explanation is to be found at the level of cultural philosophy. While there are, of course, personal political convolutions, the ideologies of communism and democracy are irrelevant in this matter.

Western culture is Cartesian in that it divides reality into material and spiritual parts and assigns to revealed religion all responsibility for the spiritual. Western science is neo-Cartesian in that it simply denies that consciousness has any reality. Because parapsychology seeks to relate consciousness to the physical world, its study is resisted both by theologians and by sophisticated scientists in the West (Honorton, 1982; McConnell, 1983, pp 49-52; McConnell, 1987, p 208).

Chinese have far less of a dichotomy in their thinking. While borrowing science from the

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West, the Chinese have retained their own essentially unitary view of nature and have no philosophic quarrel with parapsychology in their traditions. This may be the key to the large difference between the prevalence and magnitude of psi effects in China and in Western laboratories. Western parapsychologists may be unknowing victims of their cultural heritage.

Chinese researchers have been very successful in presenting psi through qigong and Traditional Chinese Medicine as something with distinctive Chinese national characteristics, a field of study in which China could lead global efforts and reflect the glory of its brilliant culture. Most Party leaders seem to believe so. Currently, researchers do not usually experience much trouble from political or ideological directions. After the June, 1989, events, reports concerning qigong and EFHB studies have increased to a rate of about six per month in the *People's Daily*, the main official newspaper.

A second International Qigong Convention (along with "The First National Old People's Qigong Study Convention") was held 10-15 September 1989 in Xian, the ancient capital city of Shaanxi Province. More than 600 papers were exhibited, of which 70 percent were from universities and other scientific research units. This dual convention attracted qigong enthusiasts from all over the country and, as in the 1988 convention, many scientifically dubious activities took place in the anterooms and on the streets (Huang, Wang, & Wei, 1989). A "World Medical Qigong Institute" with members ranging over 20 countries was formed in November, 1988, with Mr. Xi Zhongxun, vice-chairman of the China's People's Congress Standing Committee, and Mr. Chui Yueli, former minister of the Department of Medicine, as Honorary Chairman and Chairman, respectively (Feng, 1989).

At this time, the "Second National Conference of the Chinese Society of Somatic Science" was held (separately from the International Qigong Convention) on November 14 to 17 in Beijing with an attendance of about 250. Opening remarks were given by Mr. Zhang Zhenhuan the chairman of the CSSS, whom we had mentioned earlier as an interested military officer. After two plenary sessions, the conference divided into separate physical and medical sections of three sessions each. The conference rejoined in a closing plenary session to hear an address by Professor Chen Hsin, whom we have identified above as having represented the SMEI at the parapsychological convention at Cambridge University in 1982.

Evidently the senior leaders of China, now firmly in power, are favorable to the public study of qigong and related EFHB. It is ironic that Mr. Yu Guangyuan, the one who opposed psi most strongly in 1981, is currently criticized in newspapers for his "capitalistic" economic conduct in the reform movement in the late 1980's and for his political association with Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang's ill-fated successor. Judging from the favorable publicity he has received in the *People's Daily*, Dr. Qian Xuesen, on the other hand, retains his position of scientific preeminence (Yu & Shu, 1989).

For a Western parapsychologist all of this Chinese activity could be both encouraging and disturbing. Given the nature of psi, it is inevitable in any culture that parapsychology, as it gains scientific acceptance, will be bedeviled by run-away popular interest accompanied by commercialization and fraud. In a field where there is, as yet, no possible certification of ability, no limits to what can be claimed, and no scientific understanding whatsoever, it is to be expected that many persons with little or no psychic ability will peddle their wares to an eager public. Sooner or later, this will result in an adverse reaction at a high political level unless vigorous steps are taken to isolate and to publicly legitimatize the scientific approach.

Maintaining the distinction between professional parapsychology and popular occultism is especially difficult because parapsychology is largely dependent for its experimental data upon gifted psychics who do not often understand the scientific method. A still further constriction is the parapsychologist's wish not to interfere with professional psychics who choose to use their

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special gifts to help other people even though their efforts are often expressed in an envelope of superstition.

Thus, while rejoicing in the encouraging progress of parapsychological studies in China, we hope cordially that more, purely scientific and robust achievements will come in its culturally distinctive way from this great oriental nation.

Appendix
Psi Studies with "Chinese Characteristics"

Chinese leaders have often said that their goal is "modernization with distinct Chinese characteristics." The generally favorable response to psi research by these leaders may stem in great part from the fact that Chinese "somatic science" is not perceived as an adjunct to Western science but as a peculiarly Chinese endeavor. The following ideas would seem to support this point of view.

1. Historical foundations of somatic science

As previously stated, the three disciplines, Exceptional Functions of the Human Body, qigong, and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are considered to have risen from a common background. The ancient Chinese theory of qi, and its systematic approaches constitute most of the foundation. For instance, EFHB is thought to depend on the presence of qi in appropriate parts of the body, and "jinluo" (the traditional "meridian lines network") is the claimed channel for qi. Evidence for the physical existence of meridian lines was recently reported by medical groups (Zhu, 1986; Zhu, et al., 1986; Feng, 1988). These lines are thought to be the basis upon which TCM acts to adjust the human system to fight disease or to improve health, as in acupuncture practice. The theories of TCM, which espouse the interaction of several basic elements such as "qi", "xue (blood)", "yin (negative)", and "yang (positive)", can be used to explain many diseases and symptoms at a descriptive level and to provide guidance for treatment. The theory is somewhat idealistic, and its various elements are not measurable. (Unfortunately, Western parapsychology has no better theory to offer.) Dr. Qian Xuesen, who thinks of qi as a kind of informational continuity of essential importance to all living things, emphasizes the necessity for psi researchers to study TCM theory and qigong practices.

2. Avoidance of complex instrumentation

Many Chinese researchers do not like to use complicated scientific instruments directly in front of their subjects because, reportedly, in many cases, subjects have demonstrated their ability to act upon an instrument itself instead of through its sensing element, so that what really happens is never known. Therefore, the design strategy of experimenters has been: the simpler, the better. For example, a majority of PK tests are done with simple targets without the involvement of any electronic apparatus to directly monitor the results. These targets, however, must satisfy "three requirements," which have been widely adopted:

1. Targets must, in general, be unique so as to be impossible or extremely difficult to duplicate.
2. Targets must be sealed using tamper-proof methods--"irreversible" is the Chinese term.
3. There must be continuous, on-site, multi-angle observation by experimenters or by video tape.

These requirements have led researchers to believe that their results are real, and that the effect is PK acting on the target. When the use of modern instruments becomes unavoidable, it is believed that the experimental protocol must be arranged so that the instruments are "off" when

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the subject is acting, and while the instruments are "on," the subject must be away from the site and without any knowledge of when, where, or how the analysis is being performed.

3. Emphasis on gross ("macro") effects.

The availability of many able subjects as well as qigong masters who are said to produce gross psi effects almost upon demand seems to have eliminated the need for statistical analysis in much of Chinese somatic science research. Statistical treatment is often used, however, in healing-related studies. Many Chinese researchers are seemingly a little reluctant to conduct Western-style micro-PK experiments, e.g., with random event generators.

4. Psi as a personally developable skill

It is assumed as a matter of course in P.R.C. that psychic ability, as well as other benefits, can be developed through the practice of qigong. In the West, by contrast, the literature on improving one's longtime psi ability is sparse, although the importance of immediate performance-enhancing techniques is generally acknowledged.

5. Search for practical applications

Great attention is being paid to possible applications of parapsychology. Qi-emission healing is already widely used with reported clinical effectiveness. Various qigong-imitating mechanical healing devices have been proposed. It is hoped that blind people can be trained to see the world by ESP. Trials in other directions are being carried out with intimations of success. When exposed to qi emissions, Japanese mushrooms reportedly grew 35 percent heavier, on average, in a large scale test in Yunnang Provice. No one knows if any practical breakthrough related to national defense has been achieved.

6. Areas not studied

Although investigations of apparitions, poltergeists, hauntings, and survival of death (including mediumship, channelling, and reincarnation) are not formally banned in P.R.C., these topics are often considered to be sensitive, and thus are not reported as being formally studied because of concern about their ideological inappropriateness under the compelling guidelines of Marxist materialism. Moreover, researchers are comparatively ignorant concerning these psychic research topics. Some experimenters briefly investigated such areas earlier, but soon became targets for attack by Mr. Yu Guangyuan and others. It seems that no one has mentioned these topics openly since then.

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[10]In the P.R.C. authoritative statements about sensitive topics frequently appear in serial publications of restricted circulation. Later, these statements may be quoted or paraphrased in an unrestricted journal and, in this way, become available for quotation in writings intended for foreign publication. In China, papers abstracted in another journal keep their original titles unless otherwise indicated. In the present list, references are in Chinese unless notated "(In English)".

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